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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

RELEASE ON RECEIPT

SUBJECT: "Health at Home". Information from the Farm Security Administration,
U. S. Department of Agriculture

Someone has said happiness is something you've got to work at. And the same thing is true about health. You've got to work at keeping healthy.

That is just what the Department of Agriculture has been telling farm families for years. Many people have heard of the group health plans that help low-income farm families pay their medical bills by pooling their funds. The Farm Security Administration, the agency sponsoring these plans, doesn't stop with just helping its borrowers find an easier way to pay their doctor bills. It serves as a sort of unofficial adviser to thousands of farm families all over the country, encouraging them to learn and follow the rules of good health, and to seek preventive medical care before they get sick.

One of the first rules of keeping healthy is eating right. FSA Home Supervisors and Extension workers have long "preached the gospel" of better diet, with a pressure cooker under one arm and a nutrition chart under the other. And a lot of farm families have found their aches and pains disappearing when they added fresh vegetables and milk to their former diet of meat and potatoes. Farm homemakers were enthusiastic attendants at wartime nutrition classes. And many a country school "marm" has found her students brighter and more attentive because Mother found out what to put in Johnny's lunch box.

Then there is the matter of sanitation. The people who study health problems have piled up a lot of statistics to show that folks who live in the country have the highest rate of diseases such as typhoid, malaria, and hookworm..... diseases that can be prevented by better sanitation. It's easier and cheaper to screen your house and protect your water supply than it is to get over an attack of malaria or typhoid.

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With the aid of federal loans and grant funds to improve their sanitary facilities, and in recent years by installing sanitary improvements out of their own funds, FSA borrower families have helped to raise community health standards. From July of last year to June of this year, despite war-time conditions, they completed nearly 5,600 facilities on their farms, including more than 2,000 sewage disposal units, 1,500 houses screened, and 2,000 water supplies provided or improved.

It has always been harder to get medical care in rural communities because of the long distances the doctor or patient often has to travel, but wartime made the situation even worse. Instead of the old saying, "Is there a doctor in the house?", rural people have been asking "Is there a doctor in the county?". Recognizing the shortage of doctors, the Department of Agriculture urged farm folks to learn more about home care. A "Handbook on Health" was prepared and distributed to nearly 400,000 farm families to teach first aid and preventive health care. Housewives were encouraged to take home nursing and first aid courses, and many times the menfolks attended too. Wary country doctors were saved many an unnecessary trip because farm women had learned what to do about minor aches and pains and ways to keep their families in better health.

Despite the fact that health facilities are scarce in many rural communities, a lot of the resources that are on hand aren't being used because people don't know about them, or don't know their value. Farm families are urged to take advantage of the health services offered in their communities--immunization clinics, maternity and child care clinics, school health programs, the tuberculosis association, the visiting nurses association, the crippled children's program, and others. Do you know what facilities are available in your community? By making better use of them you may improve the health of your own family and encourage the further development of your local health services.

